

Statement on the Aircraft Tragedy at Elmendorf Air Force Base in Alaska September 22, 1995

Hillary and I were very saddened to learn of the death of the American and Canadian service members in the crash of a U.S. Air Force AWACS aircraft at Elmendorf Air Force Base in Alaska this morning. Their loss reminds us

how much we owe those who serve our Nation's Armed Forces. Our hearts and prayers go out to the families, friends, and loved ones of those who were killed, both in the United States and in Canada.

The President's Radio Address September 23, 1995

Good morning. I want to talk to you today about the prospects for peace in Bosnia. Over the past weeks, American leadership and the determination demonstrated by NATO and the United Nations have helped to bring Bosnia closer to peace than at any time since the war began there 4 years ago. Let me be clear: There are many tough obstacles still to overcome, but we are determined to press forward for a lasting peaceful settlement.

At the end of the cold war, Serbian nationalism forced the breakup of Yugoslavia. An ugly and dangerous war broke out in the heart of Europe, risking an even wider conflict in the Balkans which could have drawn the United States and many other countries in. Bosnia, a land in which Muslims, Serbs, and Croats had lived together peacefully for centuries, was literally torn apart.

As President, I have worked to do everything in our power to support the search for peace in Bosnia, to stop the conflict from spreading beyond its borders, and to ease the terrible suffering of the Bosnian people. We can't force peace on the parties; only they themselves can make it. That's why I have refused to let American ground troops become combatants in Bosnia. But we can press the parties to resolve their differences at the bargaining table and not on the battlefield. We will spare no effort to find a peaceful solution, and we will work through NATO to implement a settlement once the parties reach it.

Working closely with our partners from Europe and Russia, last year we proposed a peace plan that would preserve Bosnia as a state with Bosnia's Muslims and Croats holding 51 percent

of the land and 49 percent going to the Bosnian Serbs. The Muslims and the Croats accepted our plan. But the Bosnian Serbs did not. Instead, they laid siege to Sarajevo and the other U.N.-declared safe areas, denying food, denying medicine, denying supplies to innocent civilians. They continued to make war. They refused to make peace.

This July, as the Serbs continue their assaults against the safe areas, America pressed NATO and the U.N. to take a tougher stand, and our allies agreed. When a Bosnian Serb shell slaughtered 38 people in Sarajevo just 3 weeks ago, we insisted that NATO and the U.N. make good on their commitment to protect Sarajevo and the other safe areas from further attacks. We demanded that the Serbs stop offensive actions against the safe areas, withdraw their heavy weapons from around Sarajevo, and allow road and air access to the city. When they refused, NATO began heavy and continuous air strikes against Bosnian Serb military targets.

These NATO air strikes, many, many of them flown by courageous American pilots and crews, convinced the Bosnian Serbs to comply with our demands. They stopped shelling Sarajevo. They moved their heavy weapons away from Sarajevo. They opened the roads and the airports to convoys carrying food and medicine and other supplies.

I salute our pilots and crews and their NATO colleagues. Because they did their job so well, today the people of Sarajevo can walk the streets of their city more free from fear than at any time in many months. And I want to make absolutely clear that if the Bosnian Serbs strike again

at Sarajevo or the other safe areas, NATO's air strikes will resume.

Over the past weeks I also ordered our negotiators to step up their efforts to get the parties back to the peace negotiating table and to respond to shifting military circumstances in Bosnia where Croatian and Bosnian Government forces have made significant gains. The negotiators shuttled throughout the region, and they brought forth the Foreign Ministers of Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia together in Geneva. Their hard work got the Serbs to agree to the principles of our peace plan. Thanks to the combination of military muscle and diplomatic determination, there is now a real chance for peace in Bosnia. We must seize it.

I have instructed our negotiating team to go to New York on Tuesday to meet with the Foreign Ministers of Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia and our allies to push the peace process forward. Then I've asked them to return to the region to continue their intensive shuttle diplomacy and to keep the parties focused on an overall settlement. As I have said, there's no guarantee that we can reach a settlement. There are still deep, deep divisions among the parties. But there has been genuine progress.

What's happening today in Bosnia demonstrates once again the importance of American leadership around the world at the end of the cold war. Just think of the extraordinary achievements of the past year: democracy restored to Haiti, greater peace in the Middle East and in Northern Ireland, Russian nuclear weapons

no longer aimed at our people, the indefinite extension of a nuclear nonproliferation treaty, real progress toward a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty, North Korea's agreement to end its nuclear weapons program. Each one of these is a product of American leadership. In the new and changing world we live in, America is the one country that can nearly always make a difference.

But if we want to continue to make a difference, if we want to continue to lead, we must have the resources that leadership requires. I intend to do everything in my power to make sure our military remains the best fighting force in the world and that our diplomats have the tools they need to help those who are taking risks for peace. We must not let our foreign policy and America's place in the world fall victim to partisan politics or petty fights. Every American, Democrats, Republicans, independents, all of us, should agree on the need for America to keep leading around the world.

That is the lesson of the progress we're seeing in Bosnia. That's the lesson of the foreign policy actions we've taken over the last year, actions that have made the world a safer place and every American more secure.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE. The address was recorded at 1:35 p.m. on September 22 at the Tustin Officers' Club in Tustin, CA, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on September 23.

Remarks at the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation Dinner *September 23, 1995*

Thank you very much, Congressman Jefferson, for chairing this dinner and for being my longtime friend. He has such a nice name: William Jefferson. *[Laughter]* One day we were on a platform together in Louisiana, and we both kind of got to ventilating, and he said after I spoke, "It's a good thing you've got a last name or no one could tell us apart." *[Laughter]*

Congressman Payne, the CBC chair; Cardiss Collins, the foundation chair; to all the distinguished awardees, General Powell, Congressman Lewis, Muhammad Ali, Congressman Ford,

Renee Gaters, all very deserving; Ms. Gaters for your charity and your generosity over so many years; my longtime friend John Lewis for being a living reminder of what it means to live by what you say you believe; my friend Congressman Ford, who was working on welfare reform before the other crowd knew what it was. I thank you, sir.

Of course, one of your recipients has been on the front page of every magazine in this country, deluged with TV and radio requests, written a book, and has a name and face in-